

Strengthen the Bethany Neighborhood Association



Community engagement event at Splitlog Farm (photograph by Matt Kleinmann)

COMMUNITY NEED

Currently there is not an organized Bethany Neighborhood Association and through interviews and conversations within the neighborhood many felt this area is neglected. Community Housing of Wyandotte County (CHWC) has developed the Splitlog Farm on three abandoned lots between 10th and 11th Streets along Splitlog Avenue. The vision of the community garden is to: 1) transform the empty lots and mentor new productive uses of it, 2) through active use of the farm and in partnership with the M.E. Pearson Elementary School, this place is welcoming and promotes neighborly connections, 3) create a safe space for children to connect with, 4)

and provide healthy food to families that participate in gardening, 5) with the “Art Squad” program (now “Farm Squad”) new murals are being painted on nearby out-buildings that have graffiti. This initial step has been successful in initiating a safe and accessible neighborhood space.

PROCESS

Building on the above first steps and through the support of CHWC’s Steve Curtis, Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the Wyandotte Health Foundation, we were able to hire Diosselyn Tot, a life-long neighborhood resident as a community mobilizer. In mid-September, we organized a neigh-

borhood barbeque event where the KU students and neighbors shared food and conversation. Through the use of an exhibit in the Mobile Collaboratory we were able to solicit insight from neighborhood residents and civic leaders.

Following that we generated information packets for the residents. Diosselyn and Shannon walked from house to house to distribute this information and to gather more specific information from each neighbor that would agree to participate. We identified the following issues:

- The language barrier makes it difficult for the neighbors to communicate with one another and the city;



Art Squad installs traffic calming mural at intersection.



Volunteers at the end of the day.



Neighborhood resident fixing equipment (photo by Shannon Criss)

- Many feel disconnected from their neighbors and community in general;
- Many wish for stricter enforcement of laws, safety and building code violations (ie, overgrown lots, stray dogs, street-lights, safe sidewalks, crime).

Building on this insight and connecting with particular neighbors, we organized a neighborhood clean-up event where over thirty KU students joined Art Squad students, Steve Curtis, Commissioner Brian McKiernan and five neighborhood households. We were able to clear three empty lots of overgrowth, cut limbs away from power lines and remove litter; clear an alleyway; and give away over fifty plants for planting in neighbors’ yards. We

shared a lunch afterwards and gave out prizes to children.

NEXT STEPS

Continue to build neighborhood events that allow neighbors to talk with one another, set goals and develop achievable small projects. Plans include:

- meet with ME Pearson administration to help them understand what we have achieved and request their assistance;
- promote more high school student participation in the Art Squad and Farm Squad programs;
- build connections between civic leaderships to organize a Bethany Neighborhood Association with neighborhood block leaders.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Community Housing of Wyandotte County (CHWC)
Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City
Wyandotte Health Foundation
Community Health Council Wyandotte County
KU Work Group for Community Health
Central Avenue Betterment Association (CABA)
Habitat for Humanity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Steve Curtis, CHWC
Brian McKiernan, UG Commissioner